

VZCZCXRO3435
PP RUEHPA RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHNK #0187/01 0671352
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081352Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8194
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0518
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0440
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0502
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2045
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0849
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0078
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0956

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000187

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IS](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR LEAVES TOWN AS JUNTA CITES U.S.
POSTURE ON COUP, ELECTIONS, AND LIBYA AS REASONS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 183 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Status of Israeli Presence: Israeli Ambassador Miki Arbel and his wife departed Mauritania the evening of March 17. The Israeli Chancery is now officially "closed" with all security barriers and Mauritanian protective services removed. The Israeli management/security officer and two TDY security guards remain in country living and working out of the Israeli residence which continues to receive Mauritanian security protection. For the time being, the regime has told the Israelis they can continue to have their "low profile" presence at the Residence. The Mauritaniens have held out the option of a short return visit by Ambassador Arbel after the June 6 elections being organized by General Aziz.

¶2. (C) Israeli Meeting With "Foreign Minister:" Ambassador Arbel met with regime Foreign Minister Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou on March 6 to get clarification on the Mauritanian decision to withdraw security from the Chancery and force the Ambassador's departure. Mohamedou reviewed the relationship's evolution since the coup and told the Ambassador, "we made clear we wanted you to leave some time ago but you have been responding too slowly." He added, "If you had delayed one day further, I would have been forced to send you a letter telling you to leave within 48 hours." The root causes behind the regime's decision became clear over the course of the meeting:

(a) Pressure on the U.S.: Mohamedou told the Ambassador things might have gone differently had Israel convinced the U.S. to take a softer line on the Mauritanian coup. He said the General was quite upset that the Charge had taken an even tougher line with the Foreign Ministry during his March 2 demarche. Mohamedou said, "We don't get it. We thought the Americans were your friends and would do something to save the relationship. Taking a hard line with us only makes it harder to protect you." Arbel replied, "It doesn't work that way. Despite what you think, Israel does not tell the Americans what to do."

(b) Domestic Politics: Mohamedou told the Ambassador that relations remain in place and that the Ambassador could look at short visits in the future. When Arbel asked if that could happen as early as April, Mohamedou responded, "That

would be too early. Let's wait until 'all this' is over," suggesting a visit might be doable in June -- after the elections Aziz is planning.

(c) Libya and Iran: Mohamedou denied that Mauritania is making its decision in order to influence Qadhafi or seek Iranian support. He told the Ambassador, "All this stuff you're hearing about us with the Libyans and Iran is nothing." That said, the Ambassador noted to Charge that the Mauritanian deadline for his departure coincides with Qadhafi's visit to Mauritania this week supporting what is widely rumored to be an Aziz commitment to have the Israeli embassy closed before his visit. The Ambassador also noted the word on the street that Iran had offered to build five new hospitals in exchange for the Israeli departure.

(d) Peace in the Middle East (not): The Ambassador noted that the status of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians was mentioned as almost an afterthought and was clearly the least of the driving factors motivating Aziz.

13. (C) Next Steps: The Ambassador invited Charge and his wife to share their last dinner before leaving for the airport. He said the Foreign Ministry had directed him to offer their thanks for the tough line taken on their behalf with the Mauritaniens in Nouakchott and with the Libyans in Charm El Cheikh (Arbel suggested the U.S. delegation had taken the Libyans to task for pressuring Nouakchott to cut ties with Israel as part of Qadhafi's mediation effort). Arbel said he thought Israel would, for now, take Mohamedou

NOUAKCHOTT 00000187 002 OF 002

at his word and look at coming back after the June elections.

The Mission's security officer thought that would be reviewed if the Mauritanian's allow their, now unprotected, chancery to be looted or if security is withdrawn from the residence (he assumed the chancery will be looted or sacked.)

Noting the anticipated change in Israeli Foreign Minister, Arbel assumed that policy relative to Mauritania would remain the same but added, "He might ask why we are spending \$2 million a year to maintain an embassy that we can't staff." Arbel noted that while the principle with maintaining relations with Arab and Muslim countries is important for Israel, "our most important relationships are with Egypt and Jordan." With Mauritania no longer in line with Egyptian and Jordanian views on the peace process, Arbel suggested the importance of maintaining relations with Mauritania may be greatly diminished.

HANKINS